Editorial

Introduction to the Special Issue "Migrant Youth, Intercultural Relations and the Challenges of Social Inclusion"

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This Special Issue on "Migrant Youth, Intercultural Relations and the Challenges of Social Inclusion", reports recent cutting edge research into the complex nature of migrant youth settlement in multicultural émigré societies. Drawing on multidisciplinary research, it explores the latest intersecting theories on cultural diversity, intercultural relations and multiculturalism in the context of globalised cities where access to and sharing of public spaces is becoming a highly contested issue.

The articles contained in this volume are based on empirical findings from recent research into migrant youth and everyday multiculturalism, providing nuanced analyses of multifaceted connections, practices and adaptations. They incorporate both local approaches to social inclusion of young migrants in culturally diverse social milieus, as well as global insights into their transnational practices and movements, and the ways these connections impact upon notions of identity and local attachment. As much of young peoples' local and transnational networking occurs online, some of the articles also examine the way in which young migrants use social media to engage with one another and also with broader social issues. This Special Issue has, thereby, been conceived to generate new understandings into the way young people, migrant communities, agencies and policymakers can better address the challenges of social inclusion and active citizenship in multicultural societies.

Young people are increasingly seen as the central protagonists in debates about social inclusion as they "have been the focus of both hopes and fears" regarding the future of culturally and religiously diverse societies (Butcher & Harris, 2010 p. 578). When addressing issues of social inclusion and participation, the existing literature reveals two common perceptions of youth (Lentini, Halafoff, & Ogru, 2009, p. 5): first, young people are seen as potential threats to social harmony, yet at the same time the public is worried about their life and employment prospects. Bessant (2003, p. 88) similarly argues that young people are seen as the cause, the victims and also the potential solution of many social problems. Butcher and Harris (2010, p. 449) also note that: "Youth are often simultaneously imagined as at the vanguard of new forms of multicultural nation-building and social cohesion, *and* as those most inclined towards regressive nationalism, fundamentalism and racism". These multiple, and often conflicting, views of youth are prevalent in discourses of social inclusion and active citizenship in multicultural societies.

Indeed, and particularly since the 2005 London bombings, when young people of migrant backgrounds were suddenly seen as both an increased source of risk, and as being at risk of processes of radicalisation, Australian federal and state governments introduced a suite of policies, and programs supposedly aimed at assisting migrant and refugee youth with issues of settlement and belonging. Research demonstrates, however, that youth in general, and particularly migrant

youth still face many barriers in relation to social, educational, economic and political participation (Black, Walsh, & Taylor, 2011). With regards to social participation, racism is an ongoing issue in Australia, and is often fuelled by media misrepresentation of youth from minority ethnic backgrounds, particularly Muslim and African youth. These young people are often depicted as deviant and as presenting a threat to society (Francis & Cornfoot, 2007, p. 25; Lentini et al., 2009, pp. 3-7; Mansouri, Jenkins, & Walsh, 2012).

A lack of proficiency in English language skils can also restrict many aspects of participation for newly arrived young migrants and international students in society (Matthews, 2008; Cranitch, 2010). Research demonstrates that the level of support provided by families, friends, schools, adult mentors and community and government organisations, plays a considerable role in determining the ultimate types and levels of participation among young migrants in social and political affairs (McDonald, Gifford, Webster, Wiseman, & Casey, 2008, pp. 26-27). Social networks, which have the potential to provide a kind of intercultural glue, can similarly have a significant impact on successful resettlement of young migrants (Mansouri, Skrbis, Francis, & Guerra, 2013; McDonald et al., 2008, pp. 26-27).

Sports and recreation activities are other crucial social inclusion strategies that can assist in combatting racism, acquiring lanquage and forming social connections. Yet cultural and economic barriers can also restrict migrant youth participation in these types of activities (Francis & Cornfoot, 2007, p. 32).

Another ongoing issue is that most programs and policies, aimed to assist migrant youth with social inclusion are determined by adults (Harris, 2010, pp. 584-586; Harris & Wyn, 2009, p. 329). Yet, spaces for meaningful political participation by youth should ideally include input from the young people themselves at the level of design and ongoing management. These spaces are increasingly likely to be virtual, as young people are advanced users of online media who regularly connect with various virtual communities to express their opinions and conduct political debates (Harris, 2010, pp. 580-582).

These societal, intergenerational and socioeconomic factors are all critical in shaping the ways in which migrant youth understand, negotiate and ultimately shape everyday encounters in multicultural societies. The articles included in this Special Issue engage with the above themes and further contribute to developing a greater understanding of the many challenges that young migrants and refugees face when settling in a new society, as well as their strategies for coping with this transition.

Andrew Jakubowicz, Jock Collins, Carol Reid and Wafa Chafic argue that the moral panic over the participation of minority youth obscures the underlying issues facing young migrants. These issues include: a changing economic climate that impacts on employment; geographical segregation of cultural groups; closer diasporic linkages enabled by increased communication and mobility; and conflicting theoretical accounts of the effects of diversity on social inclusion. They recommend that policies aimed at assisting youth must address these deeper factors of exclusion, and that negative perceptions of migrant youth as 'threats or victims' need to be countered by providing greater opportunities for migrant youth representation and participation in varied forms of media.

Luidmila Kirpitchenko and Fethi Mansouri's article focuses on migrant youths' motives for, as well as perceived barriers to, their social engagement. The authors discuss the findings of an extensive study of young people of African, Arabic-speaking and Pacific Islander backgrounds in Melbourne and Brisbane, which positions young migrant people as active agents of social inclusion, rather than as passive recipients of government support.

Along similar lines and based on the same extensive research, Fethi Mansouri and Masa Mikola focus on migrant youth from Muslim and Arabic-speaking backgrounds and investigate how they negotiate cross-cultural engagements and tensions between family, community and the greater society. They suggest that governmental interpretations of citizenship are limited and that these migrant youth experience citizenship as a circular and contested journey.

Ameera Karimshah, Melinda Chiment and Zlatko Skrbis challenge common misconceptions and fears around Mosques, which are often envisaged as places that are conservative, gender-exclusive and socially restrictive. Instead they examine how Mosques serve as centrepieces of social networking, reflexivity and participation for young Muslims in Brisbane.

While much research on young people and social inclusion, including this volume, has largely focused on Muslim, Arabic-speaking and African communities, Danny Ben-Moshe and Anna Halafoff's article explores manifestations of anti-semitism as experienced by Jewish students in Canberra. They describe the negative effects that this discrimination has had on these children and young people, and suggest possible ways to counter these prejudices through antiracism education, and education about diverse religions and beliefs more broadly.

Moving to a more positive dimension of migrant youth social engagement, Amelia Johns, Michele Grossman and Kevin McDonald explore the impact of sport-based youth mentoring schemes on developing resilience toward violent extremism. Their article focuses on a sport-based programme for Muslim young men, aimed at facilitating wellbeing and social inclusion, which was developed by the Australian Rules Football League's (AFL) Western Bulldogs Football Club, in association with the Australian Federal Police, Victoria Police and a local City Council. The authors discuss the

benefits and challenges of researching whether sporting programmes can contribute to advancing social inclusion and building resilience against processes of radicalisation. In so doing they examine the role of social networks, bridging capital and the importance of breaking down negative perceptions and barriers between young Muslims, local communities and government agencies, in fostering resilient communities.

Finally, Amelia Johns examines how Muslim young people's social networking can create new spaces of civic engagement and political participation. She investigates online interactions between young Muslims, and between Muslim and non-Muslim citizens, which she argues can counter the marginalisation of Muslim voices and challenge negative perspectives of Muslims and Islam in the public sphere. Johns' research also challenges social and political policy constructions of citizenship, social inclusion and participation, asserting that young Muslims perform citizenship and exercise their rights online in ways that are more personal and expressive.

Many of these articles purposefully include the voices of culturally and religiously diverse young people, and focus on the issues they have raised and the solutions they have proposed to these problems. As many of the authors have described, in order for refugee and migrant youth to feel more included in the societies in which they live, and the world which we all inhabit, their voices should be more actively listened to and not merely heard. In other words, migrant and refugee youth must be engaged at all levels of social policy and political negotiation as empowered individuals capable of effecting positive change for themselves, their ethnic communities and the broader society at large (Mansouri et al., 2013).

There is no shortage of research on some of these important issues, yet there remains a strong resistance within social policy circles to examine underlying causes of grievances, and to address endemic structural barriers to migrant youth participation in society. There is also a great need to develop youth-led educational initiatives aimed at increasing intercultural and interreligious understanding in order to counter narrow and negative stereotypes of refugee and migrant young people and their communities. We hope that this volume can further stimulate debate on these critical issues and we thank all of the young participants in these studies, and the authors of these articles, for sharing their insights with us and the Journal's readership.

Conflict of Interests

The authors declare no conflict of interests.

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